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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL PURSUANT TO THE STATEMENT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL IN CONNECTION WITH THE SITUATION RELATING TO NAGORNY-KARABAKH

INTRODUCTION

1. In the statement made by the President of the Security Council on 6 April 1993, on the situation relating to Nagorny-Karabakh, the Council requested me, in consultation with the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), to ascertain facts, as appropriate, and to submit urgently a report to the Council containing an assessment of the situation on the ground (see S/25539). The present report is submitted in accordance with that request by the Security Council. The report has been prepared, after consultation with representatives of the Chairman-in-Office of the CSCE, on the basis of information provided to me by the United Nations Representatives in Azerbaijan and Armenia.

2. In a personal letter dated 31 March 1993 the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, H.E. Mr. Abulfaz Elchibey, drew my attention to the outbreak of fighting in the Kelbadjar district of Azerbaijan. In a letter dated 30 March 1993 the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations had already informed the President of the Security Council about the grave situation in that district (see S/25491). In those and subsequent communications, the Government of Azerbaijan has taken the position that Kelbadjar was attacked by forces from the Republic of Armenia and from the enclave of Nagorny-Karabakh. The Government of Armenia, on the other hand, maintains that no military forces from the Republic of Armenia were involved in the hostilities in the Kelbadjar district. The Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations, in a letter dated 1 April 1993, informed the President of the Security Council about his Government's view on the reasons for the fighting in the Kelbadjar district (see S/25510).

3. As soon as news had been received of the outbreak of new hostilities in the Nagorny-Karabakh region, the Heads of the United Nations Interim Offices in Azerbaijan and Armenia had been instructed, as a matter of urgency, to ascertain the facts on the ground, as best they could. To this end, the United Nations Representatives undertook, with assistance from their respective host Governments, field missions to the areas of conflict. The United Nations Representative in Azerbaijan went on such missions on 6 April and from 9 to 10 April 1993. On the second occasion, he visited the areas together with a CSCE preparatory mission which arrived in Baku on 7 April 1993 in connection

with the CSCE's discussions on the possible deployment of an Advance Monitoring Group in the region. The acting United Nations Representative in Armenia undertook his missions from 9 to 10 April and on 12 April 1993.

SITUATION ON THE GROUND IN AZERBAIJAN

4. On his first mission on 6 April, the United Nations Representative in Azerbaijan visited the districts of Ganja, north-east of the Kelbadjar district, and Fizuli, south-west of the enclave of Nagorny-Karabakh. Local military commanders in Ganja described the situation as very tense, indicating that the Azeri forces had lost control over the entire Kelbadjar district. They expected further advances by hostile forces. Civilian authorities in Ganja stated that the fighting in Kelbadjar had led to the displacement of 40-50,000 residents. Many of these had escaped via snow-covered mountain passes towards Dashkezan and Ganja. In Ganja, their situation appeared to be extremely serious. Many of them had walked in the snow for two to three days and were suffering from extreme exhaustion and frostbite. The local authorities in the area appeared to be overwhelmed by this humanitarian emergency. Most of the displaced people in the Ganja district were sleeping in open fields. Estimates for the remaining civilians in the Kelbadjar district varied between 3,000 and 15,000 people.

5. In Fizuli the mission met with the Speaker of the Azeri Parliament, Mr. Isa Gambar, who stated that Armenian forces were invading Azeri territory and attempting to occupy the town. The town appeared to be under military attack and incoming and outgoing shell-fire was audible.

6. During his second field mission, from 9 to 10 April, the United Nations Representative again went to Ganja as well as to the districts of Ter-Ter and Kazahk. In Kazahk the mission was informed that Armenian forces had occupied Azeri-populated enclaves within the territory of the Republic of Armenia. The local military commander also reported sporadic shelling and attempts at incursion by Armenian forces. Civilians in this area complained about the frequent theft of livestock by Armenian forces. On the second day, the mission visited Koubatly, Fizuli and Agdam. In Koubatly, which is located 2 km east of the Armenian border and south-west of Nagorny-Karabakh, the mission was told that shelling had occurred from the territory of the Republic of Armenia as well as from the Lachin corridor and Nagorny-Karabakh itself. In Fizuli there was no shelling but local officials claimed that shelling had occurred earlier the same day, killing 6 people. The situation in Fizuli remained tense. In Agdam, east of Nagorny-Karabakh, the mission was told of constant heavy shelling from Nagorny-Karabakh.

SITUATION ON THE GROUND IN ARMENIA

7. On his first field mission, from 9 to 10 April, the acting United Nations Representative in Armenia visited the southern provinces of Ararat and Goris. In several villages near the Azeri border the mission was shown evidence of substantial destruction, resulting from mortar shelling. While visiting the village of Khndzorask a mortar shell exploded only about 20 metres away from the United Nations vehicle, which was clearly marked as such. The mission also had to leave the village of Korndzor when tank fire began, apparently from the

territory of Azerbaijan. On 10 April the mission came to the view that because of the very rugged topography only aerial reconnaissance would permit a meaningful assessment of the border area between Armenia and with the Kelbadjar district of Azerbaijan. The Armenian Government was requested to provide a helicopter for this purpose.

8. After some delay, a helicopter was made available on 12 April and the United Nations Representative was able to carry out a reconnaissance, from Armenian airspace, of the border between the Republic of Armenia and the Kelbadjar district of Azerbaijan. No sign of hostilities, military movements or presence of the armed forces of the Republic of Armenia was observed.

HUMANITARIAN RELIEF

9. Following the outbreak of fighting in Kelbadjar and the outflow of displaced persons from that area, the UNHCR mission in Baku immediately dispatched a field team to Ganja and Dashkezan to assess the sudden emergency situation. The field mission estimated that relief items (blankets, winterized tents, sleeping bags and basic foodstuffs) for about 50,000 displaced persons were needed. In Baku, the UNHCR mission discussed the provision of emergency relief with senior government officials, including the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of Azerbaijan. Plans for the airlifting of shelter items and the sending of foodstuffs are currently being implemented by UNHCR.

OBSERVATIONS

10. The intensification of fighting in and around Nagorny-Karabakh, especially the recent attacks against the Kelbajdar and Fizuli districts of Azerbaijan, poses a serious threat to the maintenance of international peace and security in the entire Transcaucasus region. Because of the hostilities, it has not been possible for United Nations personnel to visit the Kelbadjar district itself and establish the precise facts on the ground. It is clear, however, that there has been a major outbreak of fighting in various locations in Azerbaijan, outside the enclave of Nagorny-Karabakh. Reports of the use of heavy weaponry, such as T-72 tanks, Mi-24 helicopter gunships and advanced fixed wing aircraft are particularly disturbing and would seem to indicate the involvement of more than local ethnic forces. However, the observations by the United Nations Representatives in the areas that they were able to visit have not made it possible to confirm this involvement.

11. The fighting in the Kelbadjar district has led to a humanitarian emergency. An estimated 50,000 persons are displaced, adding to the already very serious humanitarian burden of refugees and displaced persons in Azerbaijan. Moreover, many civilians from Kelbadjar are still unaccounted for. Unimpeded access to the area should be granted immediately to international relief organizations to ascertain the humanitarian situation and to provide relief to the civilian population.

12. The conflict over Nagorny-Karabakh, involving both Armenia and Azerbaijan, can only be resolved by peaceful means. I strongly urge all parties to cease fighting and return to the negotiating table within the CSCE's Minsk process.

The recent agreement on the terms of reference for the deployment of an Advance Monitoring Group of the CSCE was an encouraging first step towards a peaceful settlement of the conflict. Speedy progress should now be made to reach further agreements on the remaining documents, thus enabling the deployment of CSCE monitors in the region. I remain prepared, as I have been throughout the past twelve months, to give my full and active support to the CSCE's effort to convene the Minsk Conference as soon as possible and I reaffirm my willingness to lend technical assistance in the deployment of the CSCE monitoring mission.